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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Protecting children from bullying

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report of the Secretary-General, submitted in response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 71/176, follows the first report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying (A/71/213), addresses the prevalence of bullying and its impact on children's rights and presents an overview of measures adopted by Member States and other stakeholders to prevent and respond to bullying.

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I. Introduction

> "I was eight years old the first time that I was bullied. One of my classmates said to me, 'No one likes you. No one will ever like you'. From that day, I endured bullying every single day for eight years. I was verbally, physically, and cyber bullied. I believed my classmates. Their words started to become the constitution I lived by. I stopped speaking in school. I kept my head down and my eyes on the ground at all times. In a way, I began to give up".[1]
>
> *Aija, a young writer*

A. Background

1. In 2014, the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/158, in which it recognized the occurrence of bullying worldwide and its impact on children's rights, as well as its long-term effects on victims. The resolution encouraged Member States to take measures to prevent and respond to violence against children in schools, including all forms of bullying, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to its seventy-first session on protecting children from bullying.

2. The report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its seventy-first session in 2016 (A/71/213), the first report on protecting children from bullying, addressed the prevalence, causes and consequences of bullying, including cyberbullying. The report reviewed prevention and response measures adopted by Member States and other stakeholders and identified good practices, highlighted persistent challenges, recalled available data and provided guidance on priority actions needed.

3. The development of the report had special relevance as it was prepared in the second year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda addresses violence against children as a distinct and cross-cutting concern, and includes concrete commitments under several Sustainable Development Goals. Under Goal 16, the 2030 Agenda includes a specific target to end the abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children (target 16.2). Goal 4 4 highlights the importance of knowledge and skills on human rights and the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence (target 4.7), as well as the provision of child, gender and disability sensitive facilities and safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all (target 4.a). Action on school violence and bullying is also critical to achieve the Goals on gender equality and good health and well-being.

4. In its resolution 71/176, the General Assembly took note of the report, in particular its conclusions and recommendations, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its seventy-third session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted in response to that request.

[1] *Celebrating childhood: A journey to end violence against children*, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, United Nations Office at Nairobi, 2016 (available at https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/news/celebrating-childhood-journey-end-violence-against-children).

B. Methodology

5. To inform the preparation of the report, a request for information was sent to Member States,[2] United Nations entities, independent national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

6. In addition, information was gathered at three global consultations held on bullying, including online bullying (see sect. III below). The report has benefitted from a comprehensive literature review of studies and reports, including, *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*,[3] issued by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

7. In the light of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/176, information in the report gives particular consideration to the following measures by Member States: to prevent bullying, to protect children and to provide them with prompt response; to develop laws and policies, and to support them with awareness raising initiatives; to promote restorative practices to repair harm and rebuild relationships while addressing accountability of those responsible; to conduct research and consolidate data to inform effective and sustainable interventions; and, above all, to engage children in all these efforts in order to learn from their experiences and promote lasting change that safeguards their rights.

II. Nature and scope of bullying

8. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes children's right to protection from all forms of violence, including physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.[4]

9. As outlined in the previous report of the Secretary-General, bullying can be defined as intentional and aggressive behaviour occurring repeatedly against a victim where there is a real or perceived power imbalance, and where the victim feels vulnerable and powerless to defend himself or herself. The unwanted behaviour is hurtful: it can be physical, including hitting, kicking and the destruction of property; verbal, such as teasing, insults and threats; or relational, through the spreading of rumours and exclusion from a group.[5]

10. Bullying usually occurs without provocation, and it constitutes a form of peer violence. Children who bully often act out of frustration, humiliation and anger, or to achieve social status, and their actions can inflict physical, psychological and social harm. Children who are bullied are likely to experience interpersonal difficulties, to be depressed, lonely or anxious, to have low self-esteem and to suffer academically,

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[2] Notes verbales were sent to all Permanent Missions to the United Nations in February 2018 and April 2018, drawing attention to General Assembly resolution 71/176 and requesting contributions for the present report.

[3] Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016 (https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/news/ending-torment-tackling-bullying-schoolyard-cyberspace).

[4] See Convention on the Rights of the Child (resolution 44/25), articles 19, 28.2, 32 to 34, 37 (a) and 39.

[5] See also Olweus, D., *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do (Understanding Children's Worlds)*, Wiley-Blackwell, 1993.

but all actors, including bystanders and the school climate as a whole, are affected detrimentally.[6]

11. The latest data on bullying highlights that worldwide more than 1 in 3 students (130 million) between 13 and 15 years of age experience bullying, and approximately 3 in 10 adolescents in 39 countries in Europe and North America admit to bullying others at school.[7]

12. Cyberbullying involves the posting or sending of electronic messages, including pictures or videos, aimed at harassing, threatening or targeting another person. A whole range of social platforms, including chat rooms, blogs and instant messaging, are used in cyberbullying.[8] Cyberbullying can cause profound harm as it leaves a permanent footprint in cyberspace, and can quickly reach a wide audience. Bullying and cyberbullying feed into each other, forming a continuum of damaging behaviour.

13. Whether online or in person, bullying is among children's top concerns. Although rates differ from country to country,[9] it is present and widespread throughout the world, affecting a significant percentage of children as victims, perpetrators or bystanders.[10]

III. Working together: global consultations

14. Recognizing the importance of worldwide collaboration, in its resolution 71/176 the General Assembly called on the Secretary-General to support, in cooperation with United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders, the organization of follow-up expert consultations at the regional level, promoted by Member States, in order to raise awareness of the impact of bullying on the rights of the child and to share experiences and best practices.

15. Three expert consultations have been held, drawing on the expertise of Governments, young people, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia and regional bodies.

16. At the International Symposium on School Violence and Bullying: From Evidence to Action, held in Seoul from 17 to 19 January 2017,[11] the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Institute of School Violence and Prevention at Ewha Womans University presented a jointly prepared publication entitled *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*. The report looked at major areas of concern, including children at particularly high risk and presented a review of the evidence on the scope, nature, drivers and impacts of school violence and bullying globally, and on existing education sector responses to school violence.

17. Recognizing the critical need to build a sound evidence base to inform action, a new platform for monitoring school violence and bullying was launched at the International Symposium: the platform includes three main components:

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[6] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Stopping Violence in Schools: A Guide for Teachers, Paris, 2011 (http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001841/184162E.pdf).

[7] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents*, New York, 2017 (https://data.unicef.org/resources/a-familiar-face/).

[8] A/HRC/31/20, paras. 59–66.

[9] See http://www.who.int/chp/gshs/en.

[10] Roman, Marcela, and Murillo, F. Javier, "Latin America: school bullying and academic achievement", *CEPAL Review*, No. 104, August 2011.

[11] In cooperation with UNESCO, the Institute of School Violence Prevention at Ewha Womans University and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

(a) The development by UNESCO of a periodic global progress report on school violence and bullying;

(b) The identification of indicators and survey questions to measure school violence and bullying;

(c) A dedicated webpage on the monitoring of school violence and bullying.

18. On 27 April 2018, the Government of Mexico, in cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), hosted the Inter-American Consultation of Experts on the Protection of Children from Bullying and Cyberbullying. Representatives of Governments and other stakeholders from across Latin America and the Caribbean took part in the meeting. Governmental representatives adopted a declaration expressing their commitment to work towards a region free from bullying and all other forms of violence against children, in close cooperation with children and adolescents themselves.

19. On 3 December 2017, China hosted the fourth World Internet Conference in Wuzhen. The forum included, for the first time, a session on "Safeguarding the Future: Online Protection of Underage Users". The forum, organized in cooperation with UNICEF and with the participation of the Special Representative, recognized the opportunities the Internet can bring to children, as well as the risks of exposure to online abuse, including cyberbullying. The forum highlighted the role and responsibility of the information and communications technology (ICT) industry in placing the protection of children's rights at the heart of technology and product innovation efforts and in developing industry standards to safeguard their online protection.

IV. Measures to protect children from bullying

20. The information presented below was informed by submissions received from 35 Member States[12] to the notes verbales from the Secretary-General requesting information on measures taken in response to General Assembly resolution 71/176.

A. National policies, partnerships and awareness raising initiatives

21. Several countries, including Armenia, Belarus, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Iraq, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa and Ukraine have developed national action plans to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying.

22. Building partnerships across different fields and between various actors has proven to be an effective way to tackling bullying, and several countries are following this approach. Within the framework of its comprehensive strategy for the prevention of school bullying and other types of violence, Mexico has established 14 community networks in four states, implementing training, workshops and cultural activities.

23. A model of knowledge mobilization, designed to stop bullying and create safe environments for children in Canada, PREVNet, the national authority on promoting relationships and eliminating violence, has grown significantly in recent years. It is

[12] Submissions were received from: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Canada, China, Croatia, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Georgia, Greece, Honduras, Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Peru, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Switzerland, Ukraine and Zambia. Submissions from Member States are available in the files of the Secretariat.

now a network of 28 universities and 62 national youth service organizations and its mission is to stop bullying and promote safe and healthy relationships through education, research, training and policy change.

24. In Japan, the Tokyo metropolitan government is implementing a bullying prevention programme, developed in partnership with the Children's Institute for the Future of Tokyo Gakugei University. The programme addresses four themes: creating an environment where bullying is never ignored; understanding differences; establishing favourable relationships; and controlling emotions.[13]

25. A number of countries are spreading messages to prevent bullying through national awareness raising campaigns. In Kenya, 1.5 million children participated in the ninety-first national music festival in 2017, a unique and long-standing tradition in Kenya in support of music and drama performances in schools throughout the country, with around nine million children and young people participating in and benefiting from advocacy messages developed by children and their teachers. In Canada, National Pink Shirt Day in 2018 focused on cyberbullying. Each year in Romania campaigns promoted with Save the Children Romania and UNICEF help to raise awareness about the issue: most recently these included the 2017–2018 "Stop Bullying" campaign. In 2017, in Cuba, the tenth annual day against homophobia and transphobia was dedicated to the topic of bullying against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual and intersexed students in schools.

26. Action to combat cyberbullying has become a focus in several countries. Many, including Belarus, Croatia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Qatar, Romania, Slovenia and Switzerland, have supported the establishment of national hotlines. In cooperation with UNICEF, Montenegro has developed a smartphone app targeting children aged from 9 to 11 years of age to guide them through real life scenarios and to provide access for the reporting of cases of violence. In the Russian Federation, a webpage on cybersafety has been launched by the Centre for the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children.

27. In other recent examples, Italy has invested €2.5 million in the *Generazioni Connesse* network for the promotion of the responsible use of the Internet; Ukraine has addressed inappropriate content for children through *Internet Patrol*; and Afghanistan developed a policy to protect children using the Internet.

28. As noted in the annual report of the Special Representative to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-eighth session,[14] while ICTs offer enormous benefits to children, they also present risks. There is growing recognition of the need to ensure that in protecting children from the harms of the Internet, they are not denied access to the full potential of ICTs, including access to knowledge and engagement as innovators and creators of content themselves.

29. In July 2018, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation (CM/Rec (2018)7) on children's access to the digital environment, which highlights the same approach and promotes children's safety from online risks, including cyberbullying.

30. An extensive evaluation of existing initiatives within the European Union for the protection of children in the digital age carried out in 2018 proposes stepping up awareness and empowerment, including the development of an integrated approach to media literacy for children and young people, that will support critical

[13] UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017 (http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002469/246970e.pdf), p. 36.

[14] A/HRC/28/55.

understanding, creative production and participation as well as protective actions and technical skills.[15]

B. Legislation on children's protection from bullying

31. Legislation is a key element of a comprehensive strategy to protect children from school violence and bullying. Laws help to convey a clear message to society condemning violence and are the foundation for a culture of respect for children's rights. To be effective, laws must be enforced, and translated into action.

32. As acknowledged in the first report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying, approaches to legislation on bullying worldwide are varied. While some Member States have adopted specific anti-bullying laws, others address the problem within existing constitutional, criminal and civil legal provisions.

33. Some countries, including Australia, Canada, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Japan, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Sweden, have specific legislation addressing school violence and/or bullying. School bullying is covered by other relevant laws in Ireland, Singapore, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

34. Recognizing the importance of addressing violence in children's earliest years, the Government of Finland revised its Early Childhood Education and Care Act, in 2015, requiring care providers to protect children from bullying, harassment and other violence.

35. To address cyberbullying, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and the United States have adopted specific legislation, and in 2017, legislation against bullying enacted in Italy also specifically refers to cyberbullying, explicitly requiring Internet providers to remove harmful content and information if requested to do so by concerned persons.

36. Important provisions have also been introduced in criminal legislation to tackle racism, cyberbullying and harassment. In 2016, El Salvador passed a law against computer-based and related crimes, which includes the criminalization of the use of ICTs to threaten the psychological, emotional or physical well-being of children, adolescents and people with disabilities. Greece has recently adopted laws that criminalize racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination when perpetrated through ICTs.

37. In this regard, it is important to ensure that, as highlighted by the first report of the Secretary-General on protecting children against bullying, care is taken to avoid the imposition of measures that could worsen children's sense of alienation or resentment, or place them at further risk of victimization or criminalization.

38. In France, the Office of the Defender of Children's Rights promotes the protection of children's rights and best interests and considers cases of peer bullying and of adults bullying children within schools. It can investigate cases, review what actions have been taken, and, if the case needs to be followed up in the courts, inform the Public Prosecutor. It can also recommend what actions need to be taken within schools to prevent and respond to bullying.

[15] Livingstone, S; Tambini, D; and Belakova, N. (2018), Research for the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament: *Recommendations for EU policy developments on protection of minors in the digital age*, Brussels: European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies.

C. Quality and safe education for all children

39. Education plays a vital role in preventing violence, both within schools and in the wider community. A safe school promotes respect for human rights and a culture of peace and non-violence, which are essential both for children's well-being and to provide the best environment for learning. But schools often reflect wider cultures of violence within the community and the home.[16]

40. The Government of South Africa has noted significant concerns throughout the country about the lack of safety in schools, and research shows that violence in schools is often an extension of violence in society. In provinces where the threat of crime is high, so too is the level of bullying at schools.[17]

41. A study in Chile[18] shows that 33.1 per cent of children believe that bullying is a serious or very serious problem, and 13.5 per cent feel unsafe or very unsafe in school — primarily due to their physical appearance (62.6 per cent), their gender expression (38.3 per cent) or because they are, or are believed to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual and intersexed (31.4 per cent). In this regard, 70.3 per cent of students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual and intersexed report feeling unsafe in school and being victimized.

42. A common reason that children give for dropping out is that the school environment feels threatening and unsafe. Research indicates that the impact on the education of victims of school violence and bullying is significant. International learning assessments clearly show that bullying reduces students' scores.[19] Analyses of data from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam reveal that violence in schools, including physical and verbal abuse by teachers and by other students, is the most common reason given for disliking school, and, significantly, it is associated with lower scores in mathematics and lower self-esteem.

43. Several countries have been working on initiatives to create safe schools and to change norms that perpetuate violence and bullying.[20] In the United Arab Emirates, the Supreme Council of Motherhood and Childhood, the Ministry of Education and the Abu Dhabi Education Council have worked with UNICEF to pilot an anti-bullying programme to increase awareness about bullying among students and school staff. The results of the assessment of the programme showed significant reductions in being bullied and bullying others among girls, while feeling safe at school remained an issue for many students.[21]

44. To promote inclusive and quality education and to address school violence in Lebanon, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Ministries of Social Affairs and Justice and UNICEF, developed a child protection policy that includes a comprehensive methodology for early identification and referral of cases of violence and engages a wide range of stakeholders. Interventions include training for teachers and guidance for students, with a focus on creating a safe school environment based on fairness and non-discrimination.

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[16] Pells, K, Ogando Portela, M.J., and Espinoza, P., "Poverty and inequity: multi-country evidence on the structural drivers of bullying" in *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016.

[17] Submission from South Africa.

[18] The study is quoted in the Government of Chile's National Plan of Action for Childhood and Adolescence 2018–2025.

[19] See UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017. p. 30.

[20] Ibid., p. 42.

[21] UNICEF, Gulf Area Subregional Country Programme (2017) (https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Gulf_Area_Subregional_Programme_2017_COAR.PDF), pp. 6, 21 and 23.

45. Many countries, in recognizing that strong, caring relationships are key to developing tolerance and mutual respect, are taking action to nurture the building of such relationships within schools and the wider community. Studies of school-based life skills and social and emotional training programmes have shown that they reduce fighting, hitting, bullying and verbal conflict by 25 per cent among all students and by 33 per cent among selected high-risk groups of students.[22]

46. In China, guidelines on preventing school violence and bullying in primary and secondary schools adopted in 2016 require that schools implement a special education programme to prevent school violence. Schools must also establish timely reporting mechanisms for cases of violence, and strengthen school management and parent education.

47. In September 2017, the Government of China issued a paper containing opinions on deepening the reform of educational institutions and mechanisms, which emphasized the importance of helping children to acquire the knowledge, attitude and skills they need to manage their emotions, cooperate with others and establish healthy relationships and of supporting children's academic learning. In pursuance of this aim, the Ministry of Education is working with UNICEF to promote a social emotional learning approach, which includes training and resources for teachers in rural schools to build students' capacities in this regard, and a "Say no to bullying" topic in the curriculum.

48. In Jordan, the *Tarbiyeh* transformative behaviour programme, part of the Ma'An campaign to reduce violence in schools, has been implemented in 50 schools, reaching over 11,000 students. The programme has also been implemented in six schools in Za'atari refugee camp and has reached close to 4,000 students. Similar programmes have been introduced at 87 schools operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and at 69 centres in informal tented settlements. When evaluated, participating schools outperformed non-project schools in reducing physical violence.

49. In Georgia, during the period from 2015 to 2017, 1,056 school resource officers and 1,576 school principals participated in a project called, "Child abuse: referral procedures when a child is in need of protection", which included training on the prevention and response to bullying. In Bahrain, the Child Protection Centre provides a wide range of social, psychological, health, educational and legal services for children and young people, and treatment sessions encourage children to acquire vital self-reliance and self-protection skills.

[22] See World Health Organization, *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence against Children*, Luxembourg, 2016 (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/inspire/en/), p. 71.

KiVa in the United Kingdom

As highlighted in the first report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying, KiVa is a whole-school programme developed in Finland that has been implemented in 90 per cent of schools in Finland with decisive success and has been replicated in other parts of the world.[23]

In the United Kingdom, over 100 primary schools, mainly in Wales, are now trained and involved in the KiVa programme, and it is spreading to schools throughout England, with support from a team of local trainers coordinated by Bangor University. By 2017, 500 teachers had been trained, and they are now delivering the programme to over 12,000 students between 7 to 11 years of age. Recent results from the evaluations of 41 schools that delivered the programme for 12 months demonstrate significant reductions (approximately 14 per cent) in both victimization and bullying. A case study from one highly successful school has helped to identify factors that made the KiVa implementation successful and these have been incorporated into the training programmes for new schools.[24]

D. Capacity-building of professionals working with and for children

50. Evidence shows that teachers who model pro-social, constructive behaviour, provide guidance and offer protection can increase their students' resilience by showing a positive, alternative way of responding to life's challenges.[25] Teachers themselves, however, at low salaries and with little backing, often work in stressful and violent environments. Support and training are therefore essential to enable them to understand the complex issues of bullying and how to address it, not least by considering and modifying their own behaviour.

51. The Government of Zambia has introduced in-service training programmes for teachers to equip them to care and protect children from various forms of abuse, including bullying and cyberbullying. Armenia has developed training programmes for educators throughout educational institutions, which include topics on the prevention of bullying and the promotion of tolerance.

52. In Lithuania, a national qualification programme to build the capacities of teachers, including self-assessment tools, is being developed by experts. In Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Education, working with UNICEF, is focusing on training teaching staff in child development, child protection and psychology. The Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre (AMAN), a non-profit civil society organization in Qatar conducts awareness raising activities in schools to develop the skills of teachers and school social workers and to train them in the early detection of, and response to, bullying.

53. The Ministry of Education in Malaysia is developing the safe school concept through its implementation guide for the school community and family. In Croatia, the Ministry of Science and Education is providing in-service teacher training to raise awareness of the dangers of bullying.

[23] A/71/213, paras. 48 and 49.

[24] See Children's Commissioner for Wales, "Sam's Story. Listening to children and young people's experiences of bullying in Wales", 2017 (https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Sams-Story.pdf).

[25] UNESCO, "Stopping Violence in Schools: A Guide for Teachers, Paris, 2011 (http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001841/184162E.pdf).p. 19.

54. In Saudi Arabia, the National Commission for Child Welfare, in partnership with the Directorate of Private Schools and Kindergartens, UNICEF and the Arab Gulf Programme for Development, launched a "Towards a Safe Environment for Children", a personal safety programme for kindergartens that aims to develop skills for children, their teachers, parents and caregivers.

55. Building capacity among teachers is critical, but so too is training for other professionals working with children. Many Member States are providing such support. Canada is investing in initiatives to build the capacity of health and social service professionals and, through an action plan to eliminate sexual violence and harassment, is funding system leaders to respond to cyberbullying. Switzerland has ongoing training for nursing professionals, health assistants and nursery nurses on the role they play in relation to parents in violence prevention. In the Philippines, the Anti-Bullying Act (2013) provides the framework for national awareness raising and capacity-building initiatives, which include parent and family information sessions and orientation for professional groups and community leaders.[26]

56. In December 2017, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation approved the framework for the development of psychological services in the education system up to 2025. The most important goals include the design and creation of a nurturing and safe educational environment and professional assistance in overcoming school-related anxiety, fears, phobias and affective and personality disorders.

E. Child participation and empowerment

57. The active participation of children and adolescents is essential in all efforts to prevent and address bullying and to shed light on its hidden aspects. Their insights are critical to a clear understanding of the problem and also to effectively tackling it. Within schools, experience shows that interventions are more effective when children and young people are involved in their planning and implementation.[27]

58. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children in Norway has promoted and disseminated recommendations on how to address bullying behaviour that are based on the input young people, including recommendations that: students should be informed of their rights; schools should employ school psychologists; teachers should listen more to students; schools should have regular "student reviews" where children can report bullying; and teachers should work on cases of bullying until they are resolved and be commended for handling them.[28]

59. In 2017, UNICEF and other partners implemented a pilot programme for adolescents in South Sulawesi and Central Java provinces in Indonesia. The programme put forward a student led, action-research approach to building a child-friendly school environment. Students were encouraged to be the agents of change through designing and implementing solutions to bullying and evaluating the results. Results from South Sulawesi show a nearly 30 per cent reduction in bullying over the course of a year; in one school in Makassar, a 50 per cent reduction in relational bullying was reported by both boys and girls.[29]

[26] UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017 (http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002469/246970e.pdf), p. 34.

[27] Ibid., pp. 43–44.

[28] Ibid., p. 44.

[29] See UNICEF, Annual Report 2017, Indonesia, Executive Summary (https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Indonesia_2017_COAR.pdf).

60. An in-depth national survey conducted in Ecuador has provided extensive information for the formulation of the national plan to create "Harmonious Coexistence and a Culture of Peace" in schools. The plan aims to reduce violence and bullying through strengthening relationships and building capacity within educational institutions, including training and support for teachers.

61. Since 2006, "SOS mini-letter" sets have been distributed to all school children in Japan, allowing them to send their concerns about school violence, including bullying, directly to the Ministry of Justice. Supported by significant awareness raising and online resources, and a wide network of human rights volunteers, this initiative ensures that children's voices are heard and acted on.

62. Research in the United States suggests that the most effective initiatives are those where students and teachers work together to develop and implement strategies to make schools safe, as children can provide information about what is going on and usually have a better understanding of what is happening within the school.[30]

63. The insights to be gained directly from children are poignantly captured in the words of a teenage boy speaking during consultations in Latin America with children whose parents were in detention: "People who do not like you say, oh, your relative is in jail. They start saying things about you as if you were the delinquent". Children taking part in the study reported suffering stigmatization, discrimination and social condemnation, and, in particular, being rejected, avoided and feared.[31]

F. Restorative justice and accountability

64. Children's participation is essential to understand the issues of bullying, but it is also critical that their opinions contribute to decisions taken on their behalf. Children and young people frequently voice concern that no action is taken on reported bullying. This adds to their fear of reporting cases, not least because the bullying may get worse as a result of their speaking out. Restorative approaches are an important way of repairing harm and mending relationships among children while promoting the accountability, rather than punishment, of those found responsible. Such approaches offer an opportunity for all children concerned to tell their side of the story and to involve the whole community in a mediation process. This is particularly important in the case of children who bully, who in many cases have themselves been victims of bullying, as they have an opportunity to assume responsibility for their actions and to commit themselves to repairing the harm they have caused. In addition, this approach helps victims to feel their views are respected and reduces fear within the school environment.

65. Such measures have been adopted in several countries, including Ecuador, Honduras, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. In Norway, when bullying is reported to police, the case may be referred to the Norwegian Mediation and Reconciliation Services, which uses restorative justice approaches to resolve conflicts. In the Russian Federation the inclusion of a restorative approach in the learning process, including the use of mediation techniques in schools, has

[30] See UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017 (http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002469/246970e.pdf), p. 44.

[31] As a contribution to the development of the global study on children deprived of liberty, the Special Representative, together with Governments and civil society partners in Latin America, undertook consultations and organized focus groups with children whose parents are in detention. The 26 focus groups were conducted in collaboration with Gurises Unidos (Kids United) and the NNAPES organization, which works with children with incarcerated parents. Children aged from 6 to 17 from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Uruguay participated in the consultations.

contributed to the successful achievement of goals set out in the psychological services framework introduced by the Ministry of Education and Science (see para. 56 above). The Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents has been working on restorative approaches through its project, "From clash to encounter: learning through mediation". In Serbia, the Government is developing a rulebook for schools that includes elements of restitution and mediation, and promotes the importance of everyone taking responsibility within the institution.

66. As noted in the previous report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying (A/71/213, para. 87), although research on the impact of restorative practices in schools is limited, available evidence suggests positive effects, including: improvement in school culture; greater community and parent engagement; decreased use of exclusionary discipline; increased student connectedness; and decreased levels of fighting and bullying.

G. Research, data collection, analysis and use

67. Accurate, reliable, comprehensive and disaggregated data on the prevalence, nature and causes of bullying is critical to inform effective responses. Data is also essential to quantify the costs of bullying. Because of its damaging effects on learning and behaviour caused by fear and insecurity, tolerance of bullying in schools risks wasting public investment in children.[32]

68. Critically, monitoring and evaluation are essential to understand what works in different contexts and to strengthen the evidence base for effective interventions.[33] Too often, schools have been laboratories for approaches with poor evidence-based effect.[34]

69. Children's experiences of being bullied occur within the context of wider economic and social inequalities, such as poverty and gender norms, and the risk factors are mixed and often specific to the country and context.[35] The analysis of disaggregated data is thus crucial to inform prevention strategies.

70. The value of this approach is demonstrated in a recent study supported by the United States Agency for International Development. The study measured the effects of bullying on academic performance using extensive datasets from Botswana, Ghana and South Africa. It found that bullying is pervasive in all three countries and that it is one of the key drivers of low academic achievement. In Botswana, bullied students score lower in science, mathematics and reading tests than those who are not. In South Africa, their reading scores are significantly lower. In Botswana, female students who experienced bullying suffered from lower academic scores than male students who were bullied, while in South Africa the reverse is true. In Ghana the impact was the same.[36]

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[32] Richardson, D., and Hiu, C.F. "Global data on the bullying of school-aged children", in *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016.

[33] UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017 (http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002469/246970e.pdf), p. 47.

[34] Lindboe, A., and Cameron, A., "The role of independent human rights institutions in preventing and responding to bullying", in *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016.

[35] Pells, K, Ogando Portela, M.J., and Espinoza, P., "Poverty and inequity: multi-country evidence on the structural drivers of bullying" in *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016.

[36] United States Agency for International Development (2016), Kibriya, S., et al., *The Effects of School-Related Gender-Based Violence on Academic Performance: Evidence from Botswana, Ghana, and South Africa* (http://condevcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/The-Effects-of-

71. This data underscores the need to assess both country-specific and gender-specific ramifications of bullying in order to design programmes that address, among other variables, culturally-specific differences related to gender.

72. The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights has recently conducted a survey aimed at supporting a safe school environment for children and adequate working conditions for teachers through mapping types and trends of bullying and cyberbullying. The data will be analysed and the results published at the end of 2018. Jamaica is currently conducting a study involving 70 public schools in order to: identify and assess the variables that contribute to bullying; develop a profile of both bullies and victims; design an integrated response to raise awareness of the issue at a national level; and implement programmes to reduce instances of peer abuse.

73. Since 2017, UNICEF has collaborated with the World Health Organization on a programme to build the evidence of what works when addressing violence against children in schools, including bullying, using case studies from El Salvador and Uganda. It is expected that an evaluation of the programmes will provide lessons learned for planning and evaluating further interventions.

V. Emerging areas of concern

74. Since the first report of the Secretary-General, there has been a greater understanding of the manifestations and impact of bullying, as well as of emerging areas of concern.

75. In evidence drawn from a wide literature informed by Governments, United Nations agencies, academia, civil society and children themselves, the importance of promoting further research on such emerging areas is emphasized. This includes: children's exposure to violence in their early years and the critical role of parents in prevention and response;[37] the impact of teacher's roles and attitudes on children's lives; and bullying in sports.

A. Preventing bullying and other forms of violence in early childhood

76. Early childhood is widely regarded as a critical period of development. But it is also an especially vulnerable time for exposure to violence. Advances in neuroscience have made it possible to assess the impact of violence on very young children and have shown that exposure to violence produces abnormal levels of stress hormones which disrupt the brain, affecting cognitive development and language acquisition. During the child's first 1,000 days, the brain develops faster than at any other time of life and needs nurturing and loving care. The impact of fear and violence on the other hand can disrupt development, potentially affecting the child's ability to tolerate stress and anxiety in the future.[38]

77. Very young children exposed to violence may develop an exaggerated physiological response and abnormal reactivity to subsequent stressors. This can affect their tolerance of and ability to control stress later in life, leading to increased feelings of fear and the risk of developing psychological dysfunctions such as mood

School-Related-Gender-Based-Violence-on-Academic-Performance-Evidence-from-Botswana-Ghana-and-South-Africa.pdf).

[37] See Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (2018), "Violence prevention must start in early childhood" (https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/documents/publications/earlychildhood.pdf).

[38] Ibid.

disorders, aggressive behaviour and depression. It can also lead to the acceptance of and "normalization" of violence.[39]

78. In a recent report, UNICEF found that 6 in 10 children aged between 12 to 23 months of age are subjected to violent disciplinary methods, including physical punishment and verbal abuse, including shouting, yelling or screaming, as well as being called offensive names.[40] Moreover, 176 million children below five years of age witness domestic violence on a regular basis.

79. Research has found that the parent-child relationship is a significant factor in predicting bullying behaviour in adolescence.[41] There is also evidence of a link between domestic violence and bullying in schools: children who bully others are almost two times more likely to have been exposed to domestic violence than other children.[42]

80. Ongoing research makes clear that children's experiences of being bullied occur within the context of wider economic and social inequalities,[43] and are linked with the violence that occurs in the home and in the wider community. Intervention in early childhood provides a unique opportunity to reduce the negative effects of violence.

81. Most importantly, public policies that support families in their child-rearing responsibilities help prevent the risk of violence in children's lives.[44] Parenting skills programmes that go hand in hand with social protection interventions help to promote a nurturing family environment and the child's sense of belonging, reduce the risk of social exclusion and deprivation, prevent family stress and tackle social norms that condone violent forms of child discipline. Many of these programmes focus on the importance of soothing distressed children, from their birth onwards, rather that responding with anger, shouting or physical punishment.[45]

82. Recognizing the importance of supporting the efforts of parents to create a protective environment for their children, several countries are endeavouring to change harsh child-rearing practices and attitudes. For example, the Dominican Republic has invested in building the capacity of parents and caretakers through programmes promoting positive child rearing. Recognizing the need for support to parents, the Ministry of Health in Slovenia has developed the "Incredible Years" programme to impart good parenting skills.

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[39] Ibid.

[40] UNICEF, *A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents*, New York, 2017, p. 20.

[41] Nation, M., Vieno, A., Douglas D. Perkins, Santinello, M. (2008), "Bullying in school and adolescent sense of empowerment: an analysis of relationships with parents, friends, and teachers", in *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 18.

[42] See Bernacchi, E., Fabris, A., and Zelano M., "*Multi-country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children* (Italian Report), Istituto degli Innocenti, Florence, 2016.

[43] Pells, K, Ogando Portela, M.J., and Espinoza, P., "Poverty and inequity: multi-country evidence on the structural drivers of bullying" in *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016.

[44] See UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017.

[45] The success of such approaches has been evaluated by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, with funding from the Wallace Foundation: "Navigating Social and Emotional Learning from the Inside Out, March, 2017 (http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Navigating-Social-and-Emotional-Learning-from-the-Inside-Out.pdf).

B. Modelling positive behaviour: the impact of teachers' roles and attitudes

> "The way children treat each other at school mirrors the way adults treat each other in society. This means that crudeness, violence and slanderous language are all In effect, even in childhood."
>
> *Kathleen, a young writer*[46]

83. School violence remains a challenge for many children. As reported in the UNESCO global status report, *School Violence and Bullying*, research has found that the ways in which schools are organized and the norms and values promoted, especially through disciplinary practices, can give rise to increased levels of bullying. For example, a study on violence in schools in Ghana, Malawi and Zimbabwe highlighted how gender-based violence occurred against the backdrop of high levels of bullying and physical punishment. In some contexts, adults view physical punishment, fighting and bullying as part of discipline or growing up, thus normalizing these behaviours. It is evident that the actions and attitudes of teachers can shape the behaviours and responses of children.

84. Research has also revealed that the quality of children's relationships with the adults in their lives is important, and that teachers can play a central role in reducing and preventing violence and bullying among children — both through their relationships with students and the modelling of non-violent behaviour. Interventions that have focused on transforming the culture of schools, taking a strong stance against violence and supporting the use alternative ways of disciplining children and managing the classroom by teachers have proven to be particularly effective.[47]

85. In Indonesia, a positive discipline programme for teachers was first implemented in 2015, and was later integrated into a pre-existing initiative to boost literacy rates in the province of Papua. A mid-line review of the programme demonstrated decreases in both physical and emotional violence by teachers: physical punishment dropped from 20 per cent to 4 per cent, with an equally significant drop in use of emotional punishment from 13 per cent to 4 per cent.[48]

86. In South Africa, the "positive behaviour framework", which aims to create positive, predictable environments for all students, recommends empirically tested clear instructional principles on how to teach expected, appropriate, positive behaviour for all students, including the modelling of appropriate behaviour by teachers.

C. Breaking the silence on bullying in sports

87. Sport, which is hugely popular among children and young people worldwide, is beneficial for their social, psychological and physical well-being. Many adolescents spend their free time playing sport in schools, their neighbourhoods and in sports clubs where they can exercise while interacting with friends. Bullying in sport exists,

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[46] *Celebrating childhood: A journey to end violence against children*, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, United Nations Office at Nairobi, 2016 (https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/news/celebrating-childhood-journey-end-violence-against-children).

[47] See UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017.

[48] See UNICEF, Annual Report 2017, Indonesia, Executive Summary (https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Indonesia_2017_COAR.pdf).

yet it is not always recognized or addressed, and as yet there is little data on the subject.

88. Research recently conducted in Portugal and the United Kingdom analysed the incidence and nature of bullying behaviours among male adolescent athletes.[49] Of those athletes taking part in the study, research revealed that: about 10 per cent reported having been victimized; 11 per cent reported that they had participated in bullying; and 35 per cent reported having been bystanders to bullying. Bullying episodes were often characterized as being of low frequency and low duration and most frequently as verbal bullying inside the sport club. It was reported, however, that episodes repeated over time involved multiple types of bullying, particularly verbal and social exclusion, and as taking place not only inside the clubs but during competition.

89. In the highly competitive sporting environment, where winning is an important objective, the risk of bullying is clearly present. Stronger and better performing athletes are highly rewarded, while the less successful can feel rejected. Low achievers in these circumstances are at risk of bullying and cruel teasing.

90. Although the frequency of bullying in sports may appear to be lower than that reported in schools, this could be explained by the fact that victims tend to abandon sport practice early specifically to avoid bullying. Moreover, bullying in the sports context may be seen as acceptable competitive/aggressive behaviour and a natural part of the game. Complaints could therefore easily be perceived as a sign of weakness. Emerging research acknowledges that bullying in sports is of growing concern, and further efforts are needed to inform the development of broad-based intervention programmes for sports' organizations, including guidance for athletes, parents and coaches.[50] Not only are competitive sports players in need of protection from bullying, so too are the children who drop out early, and who miss out on the health and other benefits of exercise.

91. As in the case of bullying in school, adults — and especially in this case coaches — can play a critical role. Their actions can either reinforce feelings of exclusion and low self-esteem among the children under their supervision or they can play a positive role in preventing and tackling bullying.

92. Recognizing the concerns in this field, in April 2018, Finland launched a helpline for children and adults to report bullying in sports. Run by the Family Federation of Finland, the helpline, which is promoted by well-known sportspeople, aims to prevent and reduce bullying, sexual harassment and other forms of violence in sport.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

93. As recognized in the first report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying (A/71/213), bullying affects a high proportion of children, compromising their health, emotional well-being and school performance, and is associated with devastating lifelong consequences. Fortunately, and as the present report illustrates, significant efforts are under way worldwide to tackle bullying, involving different sectors of society in promoting the protection of children from its damaging effects.

[49] Nery, M., Neto, C., Rosado, A., and Smith, P.K., "Bullying in youth sport training: A nationwide exploratory and descriptive research in Portugal", *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, March 2018.

[50] Ibid.

94. Nevertheless, a wide empathy gap remains, with many adults still oblivious to incidents of bullying and its traumatic impact, or perceiving it as a normal part of growing up. At the same time, children are still often afraid to speak out and suffer in isolation.

95. Bullying can be prevented when children have safe and nurturing environments, where adults support them and model positive behaviour. Interventions around the world have been shown to work, but more needs to be done to replicate these successes.

96. Extensive efforts have been undertaken by Member States to prevent and respond to bullying since the subject was first raised by General Assembly in its resolution 69/158, but it is imperative to further the implementation of measures to protect children from its dangers.

97. The thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the first global review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2019, including Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 16, (including target 16.2 to end all forms of violence against children), present a strategic opportunity to reinforce action and accelerate progress towards the elimination of bullying and of all other forms of violence against children. In this process, particular emphasis should be placed on the following areas:

(a) Awareness raising initiatives are critical to keep bullying prevention in the public eye, inform society of its dangers and provide information to children that encourages them to speak up and seek support: information and social mobilization initiatives must be sustained over time, with high visibility, in order to change attitudes that condone school violence and bullying and to provide practical feedback that will support children's enjoyment of their rights;

(b) Children are key experts on bullying as they are the ones who suffer from its harmful effects and are uniquely placed to inform solutions: children must therefore be part of all efforts aimed at prevention, protection and response, must be provided with opportunities to participate effectively and must be informed of available support services; in particular, children in vulnerable situations must be given priority, including through efforts to promote mutual respect and tolerance for diversity that overcome stigmatization, discrimination or exclusion based on, inter-alia, race, ethnicity, disability, gender or sexual orientation;

(c) Parents and caregivers need support in developing skills in non-violent discipline and modelling respectful and compassionate behaviour as nurturers, including information that helps them to detect the warning signs of bullying and to support their children when they are affected by peer violence and violence at school;

(d) Whole-school programmes that engage the wider community have been shown to be most effective in preventing and responding to bullying; such efforts must be child-centred, involve all actors, including students, teachers, school staff, parents and local authorities, and must be sustained by strong leadership and adequate resources: teachers, who play a central role in these efforts, must be supported through training on how best to prevent and respond to bullying, inter alia, through modelling positive behaviours, and through specialized training to facilitate discussions about bullying, as, fearing a negative reaction, children may be afraid to share information with adults; and they must learn to respond without delay to reported cases of bullying;

(e) Legislation must underpin comprehensive policies to prevent and respond to bullying in order to give weight to their enforcement, and laws are critical to specify prohibited conduct and to safeguard the rights of affected children, including through child sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms: legislation

is equally important in establishing protection for groups at special risk of bullying, including cyberbullying, and restorative approaches should be given priority in this regard so as to prevent recidivism and avoid the imposition of measures that could worsen children's sense of alienation and place them at further risk of victimization or criminalization;

(f) Accurate, reliable and disaggregated data is critical to breaking the silence and promoting positive changes to prevent and tackle bullying, and evidence-based initiatives are essential to providing effective prevention and response measures: programmes that work to strengthen children's life skills and inform them of ways to prevent and respond to violent behaviour and bullying, and to resolve conflict, can be replicated and expanded across communities, schools and within countries, but these programmes must be informed by sound research that considers children's experiences and the influence of different social and cultural contexts, and further research is needed on emerging areas of concern, including: the effect of violence against children in early childhood and the detrimental ways in which it affects their adult lives; the behaviour of teachers and its impact on the perpetuation of violence and bullying in schools; and the potentially far-reaching impact of bullying in sports.

98. With the leadership and ongoing support of Member States and the combined efforts of all sectors of society, it is possible to protect children from the torment of bullying and to prevent the harm that it wreaks on so many of the world's youngest citizens.

> "It will get better. There is always someone to talk to. Whether that's your mum, sister, teacher or peer. There is someone who wants to help; and you have to let them."
>
> *Secondary school student*[51]

[51] See Children's Commissioner for Wales, "Sam's Story, Listening to children and young people's experiences of bullying in Wales", 2017.